

August 16, 2013

Governor LePage,

As I have expressed to you before, it is an honor to serve in your administration as Commissioner of Education and I am profoundly grateful that you appointed me to this position. I consider myself extraordinarily fortunate to work for a governor who has the passion for education that you have, and I truly believe that under your leadership, meaningful reforms have been put in place that will improve outcomes for students across Maine.

I am writing to you today to let you know that I have been offered a position with CCSSO, the Council of Chief State School Officers, which is the national organization of state commissioners of education. One of the pieces of work that the Council does is to support innovative educational practices in states, and we as a state have been partnering with CCSSO over the past few years to support the kind of student-centered approaches to teaching and learning that you have often called for. CCSSO is looking for someone to lead their innovation work nationally. The person in this position would work directly with states and with national organizations to develop and implement strategies to support innovative educational practices in schools across the country. CCSSO wants to expand the organization's work in this area, especially as it regards personalized learning and technology integration, and wants the person in this position to lead that effort.

After giving it a great deal of thought and after extensive discussions with my family, I have decided to step down from my current position and take this position with CCSSO.

This is not a step I take lightly. I firmly believe in the reform work we are doing here in Maine and I am confident that the reforms we have advanced, both in terms of education policy and in terms of how the Department of Education does its work to support schools and students, will lead to improved student outcomes.

What CCSSO is offering, however, is an opportunity to work with a major national organization to advance the kind of student-centered models of teaching and learning that we have been supporting, under your leadership, here in Maine. As you know, Maine is seen as a national leader in innovation and personalized learning, including digital learning, and I was approached by CCSSO in no small part because of the innovative work being done in Maine's schools today. This opportunity will not only allow me to share with other states the work Maine has done, but to bring back to Maine innovative practices that are showing results in other states.

I do appreciate that there remains work to be done here at the Department of Education, and what I would propose is that with your permission, I would remain in my position until early September, and over the intervening weeks, I will work with my team to develop a detailed transition plan for you that outlines all of our key initiatives, describes their current status and outlines next steps for each. I have a

very strong team at the Department, they are committed to the work we are doing, and I have no doubt that we can develop and implement a concrete set of strategies to ensure that the work we are doing continues as I transition to this new role.

As I wrote at the beginning of this letter, serving your administration in this capacity has been tremendous honor. Your "students first" agenda is one I am pleased to have worked to advance, and I truly believe we have some meaningful achievements to be proud of. We've enacted charter school legislation and will have five charter schools operating this fall. We've seen the development of a number of early college programs and will see a dramatic expansion of these programs over the next couple of years as a result of our work. We've strengthened CTE and Adult Education, passed major legislation on educator effectiveness, adopted rigorous academic standards and, through the school performance grading system and the recently approved NCLB waiver, we've made significant efforts to improve school and district accountability. Work is underway to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Department, and strategies are currently being implemented to better focus the Department's resources around school improvement, including an emphasis on gathering and sharing best practices from across the state and nation. I am very excited about what we have been able to accomplish and I know the team at the Department is fully committed to the ongoing work of improving outcomes for all students.

In closing, I very much appreciate the opportunity you have given me to serve in your administration, I wish you and your team the very best, and I look forward to continuing to work with you and the administration in this new role.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Stephen Bowen', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Stephen Bowen